

Chapter VIII

Facilitating Reflective Teaching: Video–Stimulated Reflective Dialogues as a Professional Development Process

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ABSTRACT

This account of a research project explores postgraduate in-service teachers' understanding and facilitation of active learning in primary, secondary and higher education in the United Kingdom. Qualitative data were elicited from six teachers during 2003-2004 using video-stimulated reflective dialogues of classroom practices illustrative of active learning. Outcomes of 18 dialogues have been taped, transcribed and analysed. The dialogues have begun to reveal teachers' thinking, feelings and actions as facilitators of active learning. Findings, which are presented as case studies, indicate that teachers associate active learning, among other things, with learner autonomy, empowerment, developing higher order thinking skills and cooperative group activities. Increasingly, teachers devolve the locus of control of learning to their learners with appropriate guidance, monitoring and interventions. Classroom practices reflect an emphasis on discourse between learners and with teachers, guided discovery learning and learning as an essentially social process. The evidence suggests that video-stimulated reflective dialogues are an effective method for revealing teachers' tacit knowledge about their pedagogy. Video-stimulated reflective dialogues emerge as a highly effective professional development tool which can enhance teachers' career progression as they acquire and apply sophisticated higher order thinking skills in relation to their pedagogies.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses mainly on data elicited from primary and secondary school teachers'

video-stimulated reflective dialogues on active learning. The research project offered experienced teachers (6-20+ years in the teaching profession in the United Kingdom) an opportunity to focus

on that aspect of their career progression which is concerned with developing expertise as a classroom practitioner. The data represents a small sample from a larger study (2003-2007) which is expected to result in 30 video-stimulated reflective dialogues with nine teachers. It is not my intention in this chapter to engage in an extensive, critical interrogation of literature on the subject of active learning (see, among others, Jones & Merrit, 1999; Livingstone & Lynch, 2000; Broadhead, 2001; Niemi, 2002; Birenbaum, 2002) and reflective dialogues (Moyles et al., 2002). I am concerned with conceptualizing video-stimulated reflective dialogues, outlining my research methodology and describing and interpreting findings presented as intrinsic case studies (Stake, 1995).

My research is based on a belief that teachers' continuing professional development involves critical reflection on practice (see, among others, Brookfield, 1998; Muir & Beswick, 2007). Recent studies concerned with reflective teaching and its impact on professional development (Kennewell, Tanner, Jones & Beauchamp, 2007; Snow-Gerono, 2008) underscore the continuing importance of reflecting on pedagogies in order to improve them. The first phase (2003-2004) of this research project was concerned primarily with revealing teachers' thinking, feelings and actions as facilitators of active learning. The second phase of the research (2005-7) focused on using video-stimulated reflections to critique teachers' practice as well as the data-elicitation method. The research will then be developing as a reflective critique of reflective practice.

BACKGROUND

Conceptualising Video-Stimulated Reflective Dialogues

Video-stimulated recall (VSR) has a lengthy pedigree as a data-collection method in research into teaching (see Lyle, 2003). VSR 'is an intro-

spection procedure in which normally videotaped passages of behaviour are replayed to individuals to stimulate recall of their concurrent cognitive activity' (Lyle, 2003, p. 861). This narrowly focused definition is somewhat limited because it omits a reference to an individual's affective responses. VSR has been influenced by Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) which is 'the basic process of reviewing a videotape with a person trained in recall technique' (Kagan, 1976, as cited in Dawes, 1999, p. 203). Kagan believed that IPR could provide people with a way of seeing themselves in action and of getting to know themselves more deeply and in new ways' (ibid.). The use of visual stimuli can be problematic as:

Calderhead (1981) ... notes that there are issues arising from the subjects' anxiety, the limitations of the visual cues (i.e., not being from the subjects' perspective), whether tacit knowledge can be verbalized, and conscious censoring of the recall by the subject. Calderhead, therefore, stresses the need for rapport, familiarity with the technique, and 'screening' the research goal from the subject. (Lyle, 2003, p. 864)

Video-stimulated reflective dialogues have, according to Moyles et al.:

... similarities with procedures adopted in Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) ... used for training mental health professionals. ... Reflective dialogue is, however, different from IPR in one crucial detail—it is the practitioner who controls the focus and pace of the prompts. This was vital to us in our research because we wanted the practitioners to feel a sense of ownership over the research and not view it as something which is 'done to them'. (Moyles et al., 2002, p. 465)

The video-stimulated reflective process is a collaborative inquiry between research partners—teacher and researcher. It is intended to reveal teachers' thinking and feelings about specific,

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